

Practice 3: Writing Topic Sentences

- A. Write a topic sentence for each of the following topics. Remember to include both a topic (main idea) and a controlling idea.

Example

Topic: The effect(s) of television on children.

Topic Sentence: Television is harmful to children because it teaches them violence as a way of life.

or

Television retards a child's reading ability.

1. The effect(s) of smoking on a person's health.
 2. The benefits of foreign travel.
 3. The importance of a college education for your field of study (engineering, medical technology, art, business, etc.).
 4. The cause(s) of a current problem in your country (or in the United States).
 5. A cultural difference between your country and the United States.
- B. Choose, either individually or with your classmates as a group, five additional topics that interest you. Write these topics in the spaces below. Then write topic sentences for each.
6. _____
 7. _____
 8. _____
 9. _____
 10. _____

The Concluding Sentence

Now that you know how to write a good topic sentence for a paragraph, you should also learn how to write a good concluding sentence. A concluding sentence is not absolutely necessary, but it is very often helpful to the reader because it signals the end of the paragraph and because it reminds him/her of your important points.

A concluding sentence serves three purposes:

1. It signals the end of the paragraph. (Use an end-of-paragraph signal such as "In conclusion," "In summary," "Finally," etc.)
2. It summarizes the main points of the paragraph.
3. It gives a final comment on your topic and leaves the reader with the most important ideas to think about.

The examples below demonstrate two different types of concluding sentences. The first one paraphrases the topic sentence; i.e., * the concluding sentence repeats the main idea of the topic sentence in different words. The second example summarizes the two main points of the paragraph, which were not specifically stated in the topic sentence.

Model 3: Concluding sentences

Synonyms

Synonyms, words that have the same basic meaning, do not always have the same emotional meaning. For example, the words "stingy" and "frugal" both mean "careful with money." However, to call a person stingy is an insult, while the word frugal has a much more positive connotation. Similarly, a person wants to be slender but not skinny, and aggressive but not pushy. Therefore, you should be careful in choosing words because many so-called synonyms are not really synonymous at all.

Gold

Gold, a precious metal, is prized for two important characteristics. First of all, gold has a lustrous beauty that is resistant to corrosion. Therefore, it is suitable for jewelry, coins, and ornamental purposes. Gold never needs to be polished and will remain beautiful forever. For example, a Macedonian coin remains as untarnished today as the day it was minted twenty-three centuries ago. Another important characteristic of gold is its usefulness to industry and science. For many years, it has been used in hundreds of industrial applications. The most recent use of gold is in astronauts' suits. Astronauts wear gold-plated heat shields for protection outside the spaceship. In conclusion, gold is treasured not only for its beauty, but also for its utility.

Practice 4: Writing Concluding Sentences

- STEP 1 Underline the topic sentence in each paragraph.
 STEP 2 Determine the main idea of each paragraph.
 STEP 3 Add a good concluding sentence to each. You may either paraphrase the topic sentence or summarize the main points.
 STEP 4 Begin each concluding sentence with an end-of-paragraph signal.

Paragraph 1

- 1 You can reduce gas consumption in your car by careful driving and good maintenance. Don't speed. Gas consumption is about 10 percent higher at 60 miles per hour than at 50 miles per hour and even greater at higher speeds. Avoid fast stops and starts because they wear your tires out in addition to using a lot of gas. Check your tire pressure often because underinflated tires reduce gas mileage considerably. Get your car tuned up regularly because an inefficiently operating engine results in inefficient fuel consumption.

Paragraph 2

- 1 Alternative energy sources are becoming increasingly attractive as the energy crisis becomes more severe. Solar heating systems, which use the sun's radiation as a source of energy, are a promising alternative energy source. Nuclear power plants are already in operation in several parts of the country. Government and private industry are even
- 5 investigating the possibility of capturing the power of ocean waves and tides for conversion* into usable energy. Coal is once again becoming an acceptable fuel as the nation searches for solutions to the energy shortage. Even garbage is seen as a potential source of energy. In some communities, garbage is burned to heat buildings and light city streets.

Paragraph 3

- 1 House construction in various parts of the world depends mainly on the availability of building materials. For example, the Eskimos, living in a treeless region of snow and ice, sometimes build temporary homes out of thick blocks of ice. People who live in deserts, on the other hand, use the most available material, mud or clay, which
- 5 provides good insulation* from the heat. In Northern Europe, Russia, and other areas of the world where forests are plentiful, people usually construct their homes out of wood. In the islands of the South Pacific, where there is a plentiful supply of bamboo and palm, people use these tough, fibrous* plants to build their homes.

Paragraph 4

- 1 There are numerous everyday words in English that have come from other languages. Americans relaxing at home, for example, may put on *kimonos**, which is a Japanese word. Americans who live in a temperate climate may take an afternoon *siesta** on an outdoor *patio**, without even realizing that these are Spanish words. In their garden,
- 5 they may enjoy the fragrance of *jasmine* flowers, a word that came into English from Persian. They may even relax on a *chaise longue** while sipping a drink made with *vodka*, words of French and Russian origin, respectively.

conversion: change
insulation: protection
fibrous: containing fiber
kimono: lounging robe

siesta: afternoon nap
patio: courtyard
chaise longue: lounge chair

Paragraph 5

- 1 There are two major differences between the European and American university systems. In European universities, students are not required to attend classes. In fact, professors in Germany generally do not know the names of the students enrolled in their courses. In the United States, however, students are required to attend all
- 5 classes and may be penalized* if they don't. Furthermore, in the European system, there is usually just one comprehensive examination at the end of the students' entire four or five years of study. In the American system, on the other hand, there are usually numerous quizzes, tests, and homework assignments, and there is almost always a final examination in each course at the end of the semester.

Review: What Is a Paragraph?

These are the important points you should have learned from this chapter:

1. A good topic sentence:
 - a. is a complete sentence with a subject, a verb, and generally a complement.
 - b. states both the topic and the controlling idea of the paragraph.
 - c. is neither too general nor too specific. It states the main idea clearly, but it does not give the specific details.
 - d. is usually (but not always) the first sentence in the paragraph.
2. A good concluding sentence:
 - a. signals the end of the paragraph.
 - b. summarizes the important points briefly.

WRITING PRACTICE

Choose a topic from the list below and write a paragraph six to ten sentences in length.

- STEP 1 Begin your paragraph with a good topic sentence and underline it.
STEP 2 Write several supporting sentences that explain or support the topic sentence.
STEP 3 Write a good concluding sentence and underline it.
STEP 4 Check your paragraph against the Paragraph Checklist on page 16 before you hand it in.

Topic Suggestions

Arranged marriages.
Uncontrolled population growth.
Computers, calculators, or machines in general.
Left-handed people.
The advantages of having a college education.
Owning a car.

penalized: punished